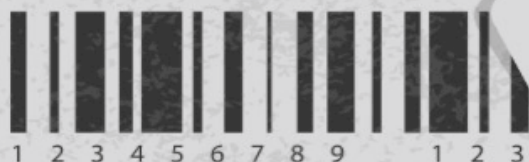


SLACKER FRIEND

APRIL 2026



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FEATURED:
PYNKIE
ELLEN READE
DALE FAHEY
AUTHOR LEX LYNN



LINDSEY RAE RADICE, also known by her artist name, **PYNKIE**, is a New Jersey/New York based musician/singer-songwriter, who gained popularity in the late 2010s for her song “Dew”. In this interview, conducted via both Zoom & instagram voice notes (due to a power outage in January 2026), she discussed her inspirations, her writing style & her career outside of music, at the time.

How did you first step into making music?

PYNKIE: I started making music in college around 2012–2013. A friend, Aaron, showed me Audacity, a free recording program, and I began layering my voice and guitar. I’d played guitar since I was younger, but I didn’t start writing my own songs until I was 18 or 19. At first, they were silly, like a song about my duck-patterned shower curtain or one about cup noodles, probably the first song ever about cup noodles. I didn’t start taking it seriously until around 2016, when I began writing “real” songs.

I believe I came across your music in might have been during the pandemic...

PYNKIE: Yeah 2018 is when something kind of got semi-viral not really but my song “Dew” for some reason started getting a lot of plays and stuff but before that no one knew who the hell i was and still most people don’t but all right i mean that was like the thing in 2018 so it makes sense if you learned about me then. Right. Yeah, cool.

You started originally with Audacity. How did those early limitations influence your songwriting and sound?

PYNKIE: I think having limitations is actually helpful. It keeps you from getting overwhelmed by all the choices in a program like Ableton, which I barely know how to use. I stick to basic demo-making. Limiting yourself lets you focus on the core song structure and can make your writing stronger. For singer-songwriters like me, keeping it simple during the writing process works better. Of course, if you’re making complex beats like Grimes, you need more advanced tools, but for me, simplicity helps the ideas flow.

What does your songwriting process usually look like from your first idea to finished song?

PYNKIE: I usually start with a simple chord progression for a verse or chorus, then just freestyle over it. I like to do what people call stream-of-consciousness singing; what I think of as turning into a “meat radio,” where you channel different stations and just let the ideas come out without overthinking. That’s often how the best stuff emerges; it might not be your first thought, but if you keep at it, something cool usually comes out.

That's really cool and that's a very interesting term to use the term “meat radio”... What’s the inspiration behind that term?

PYNKIE: Yes, I have a whole thing about that.

PYNKIE: I've experienced shared dreams with people: close friends, partners, or even just someone I know. Sometimes you're sleeping next to them, sometimes not, and you end up in the same dream place on the same night, interacting. Then the next morning you realize, "Wait, you were in my dream last night?" and they say, "Yeah, I was in yours too." It's bizarre. I think of it like we're tuning into different stations of consciousness, and I feel like that translates into art or songwriting: you can tap into different levels of it, and it's really cool.

PYNKIE: I've also gotten a little into quantum physics. I can't get through a whole book, it's way too complicated, but the bits I do understand are mind-blowing. It's amazing stuff.

So would you say that most of your song form like a dreamlike or nostalgic type of lyrical state?

PYNKIE: Yeah, most of them do. If I try to force something, it usually doesn't work and isn't as good. So I never really do that. Almost all my songs start with a stream-of-consciousness approach, and then I might refine or change them later, but they always begin that way.

When you listen back to your older releases compared to like your newest one, which I think is "Big Feeling", What differences stand out to you the most?

PYNKIE: Back in 2016 and 2017, when I was writing my first official releases, I was really into Mac DeMarco-style indie stuff. Now I'm more into '90s rock, not the 2000s alternative kind, and I've been obsessed with it for a long time, especially the really underground stuff that almost nobody knows about. It's unfortunate because hardly anyone cares, but I love it. It's the coolest stuff. It's funny, though, because people seem to be coming around to it now. There's always this 30-year cycle where the past comes back, and the '90s are back exactly on schedule.

Which which artists are you currently taking inspiration from now as far as from the 90s?

PYNKIE: I'm obsessed with Julie Doiron. It's funny because recently one of her old songs, "August 10", went viral on TikTok, and her plays shot up from around 12,000 monthly listeners to something like 33 million. It was basically a demo from the '90s that nobody knew, and suddenly she blew up, 30 years later! That gave me hope because you never know what will happen. I already loved her music long before that, and I still do. She's an incredible songwriter.

Who else?

PYNKIE: I really love That Dog., especially their 1995 album, *Totally Crushed Out*. I really love that album. And Velocity Girl. I'm obsessed with them!

You actually opened for Julie Doiron when she played in New York correct?

PYNKIE: Oh yeah, you knew about that? I got involved because a friend of mine, Matt, had a friend opening for Julie on a tour. It was just the two of them, so sometimes they needed a third act, and he recommended me. I got to be that third act. It was really full circle. I got to meet her, and she's so sweet and nice. I love her! She's really cool!

Has has being a nurse influenced your songwriting or what you write about in any way?

PYNKIE: No, I feel like that's a totally separate world! I need something apart from that. I work part-time; I couldn't do it full-time. Seriously, God bless nurses' souls. I went back to school and now I'm training to be a nurse practitioner, which is kind of like a doctor. I'm still working part-time while going to school. Eventually, I'll be a nurse practitioner, though I'm not sure exactly what I'll do with it. I think I want to do esthetician work; Botox, therapy, that kind of thing for people who can afford it. Honestly, I just want a chill job. I'm sick of working my ass off; I've been at it for seven and a half years. Some people love it, and God bless them, but it's a lot. I still do my best, but man, it's a lot of work.

How has sharing your music publicly affected your confidence or creative direction over time?

PYNKIE: I think it's funny how people always seem to love the stuff that artists like the least. My most popular songs are often the ones I feel least represent me. That's affected me because sometimes I try to make what I think people want, and it ends up annoying me. So usually I stick to what I want and am pretty selfish about it.

PYNKIE: Sometimes I do let it influence me, though, and that can be good, as it pushes me to make things people enjoy. I go back and forth between that and making the 90s rock I love, which has an audience but not as big as the bedroom pop or Mac DeMarco-style stuff. There's always that balance: doing what you love versus what listeners might enjoy. Sometimes trying to think outside your box because of that influence ends up inspiring really cool ideas.



Photo: © Kelli McGuire

Which artists continue to inspire you today? And how do those influences show up in your work going forward?

PYNKIE: Julie Doiron has definitely been a huge inspiration! I've been obsessed with her for years.

She's one, but sometimes I also draw inspiration by stepping into other artists' minds.

PYNKIE: For example, recently I was asked to make a song that sounded like Portishead. TV Girl and George Clanton, who did a collab album, sent me an instrumental and invited me to contribute. My only instruction was to make it sound like Portishead, so I tried to get into their headspace and create the song through that lens. I do similar exercises sometimes with other artists.

How has being part of the new jersey music scene shaped your growth and opportunities as an artist?

PYNKIE: I haven't had many opportunities come specifically from being in New Jersey. Most of mine came from the internet, posting on SoundCloud early on, social media, Spotify algorithms, and YouTube creators sharing my work, like David Dean Burkhart. Repost culture used to be bigger, but overall, the internet has shaped most of my opportunities as an artist more than the local scene.

What themes/ideas are you interested in exploring more, going forward, into 2026?

PYNKIE: In future releases, I'm definitely interested in exploring more electronic sounds. I really enjoy writing lyrics and melodies for electronic tracks, like the one I did with TV Girl.

PYNKIE: I'd love to collaborate with more people to push myself out of my comfort zone and experiment with genres I'm less familiar with. Sometimes the best ideas come from stepping outside what you know. At the same time, I plan to keep making demos in my bedroom, doing stream-of-consciousness writing, and just noodling with ideas whenever I have free time.

Who are your top 5 albums & songs from 2025? Top 5 shows you've seen?

PYNKIE: The top five artists/albums of the year for me are: Laveda, Clara Joy, Neggy Gemmy, and TV Girl/George Clanton. All of them are friends of mine, but they're all talented as fuck.

Are there any other local NJ/NYC indie artists you'd recommend to readers of the magazine?

PYNKIE: Other local New Jersey and New York artists I'd recommend are Tex Petrello, Ana Altman, Johnny Elsewhere, and my fiancé, who's about to release an amazing album full of pop brilliance and ethereal electronic sounds. He's already dropped some singles, and they slap! I'm excited to be featured on one of the upcoming ones. K. Porcelain and Lumberob are incredible! I'm obsessed with Lumberob's songwriting, and he's amazing live. Pinc Louds are also unique and put on incredibly fun shows.

SOUND is RELATIVE:

DALE



FAHEY

Spincycle ²,

Mess Folk

& Trash Brain

What bands do you remember seeing early on that stuck with you as a fan?

The ones that stuck with me, there's a lot. Some took time to appreciate, but early on it was Tilted and Smiling Uniks, Shane Brown Fan Club, and HEDGE. They were from my high school and had tapes out, which was cool. Those were the first bands that grabbed me because I'd seen them live and could listen to their music.

That's going way back to when I first started going to shows. I remember realizing last year that February 1995 was 30 years ago. That hit me. As you get older, you keep hitting those milestones; 20, 25, 30 years.

When you were starting out, who or what influenced how you perform and play? Do you sing?

I don't sing much, just some backup vocals in bands, and even that started later. In my first band, I only did one background part.

As for playing guitar, it's like anyone else: you're influenced by what you hear before you start playing. I grew up around a lot of music, from different genres, and there was a lot of underground stuff gaining attention then.

I started playing later than most, around 16 or 17. Before that, I always thought if I had a guitar, I'd try it. I remember checking for an old guitar my brother had, but it was gone.

After I graduated, I got a guitar. I didn't play in a real band until about five or six years later. I jammed with friends, tried a few bands, but wasn't always the right fit. That's part of figuring things out.

By the time I was 23, I'd listened to a lot of music, so everything fed into how I played. My influences came from everywhere.

What influences still show up in your playing today?

It's like a big web of everything. I'll remember a sound from a record or something I heard years ago, and it shows up later. Or I'll hear something that day and it sparks an idea.

I hum songs all the time, so ideas come from half-formed thoughts or past influences. It's broad, but that's how it works.

What was the scene like in Cape Breton when playing in Spincycle Squared or Mess Folk?

They were very different times. Both bands I joined started as solo projects.

Spincycle Squared started in Halifax and became a band in 1999. Mess Folk developed differently, with more experimental material. We played a lot in Halifax, sometimes more successfully than in Sydney.

The scenes were different; about 10–12 years apart, but both were exciting. Mess Folk also got international attention, with reviews and releases, which added to that excitement.

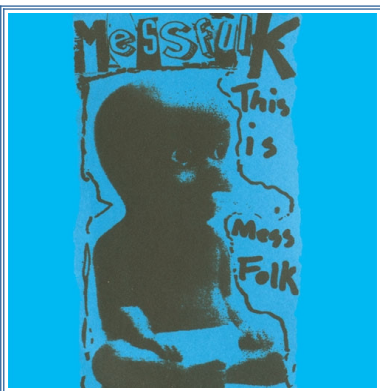
Did the recording process differ between those bands?

Yes, a lot. Spincycle Squared had fewer recordings and was more drawn out. Mess Folk varied from rough recordings to proper studio work.

Sometimes you just worked with what you had to capture the moment.

What were some of your most memorable gigs?

I remember most shows. Early Spincycle shows stand out: first time playing Cape Breton, Gobblefest, and early 2001 shows.



There were fun nights at places like the Seahorse and the Marquee. One Gobblefest, I fell off the stage but didn't get hurt.

We did a show and covered a local band's song, which was great. Reunion shows later on were also memorable.

With Mess Folk, there were tons: first show (even though my bass barely worked), shows in Halifax, a chaotic experimental set that didn't go over well, apartment shows, and a wild weekend in New Brunswick.

Tour shows in Ottawa, Montreal, and Toronto were packed and memorable, especially Montreal.

A big part of all of it is the people; those memories are tied to friends!

Did you record live shows?

Yes, a lot. Some were usable, some weren't due to technical issues.

We once recorded a show intending to release it, but problems with the bass made it unusable. Still, it was valuable to have.

There are recordings I'd still like to release someday as part of a collection, on Bandcamp or similar.

How did your other bands compare, such as The Shithawks?

They differed in sound. Shithawks leaned toward fast, upbeat hardcore punk. Mess Folk was more varied rock, noise, experimental, even softer material.

All the bands shared roots in indie rock, punk, and experimental music, with some pop sensibility.

Would Spincycle Squared ever reunite?

Maybe, but nothing planned. It depends on timing and interest. It would be fun. We had great songs and enjoyed playing together.

Was there much unreleased material?

Not much. A few demos, unfinished tracks, and one song I'd consider releasing. Most material was put out.

What role did the local Cape Breton music scene play now, and then?

A huge one. Promoters, venues, and individuals all contributed.

Someone like Harry Doyle stands out; he's done a lot for the community. But there were many people, even those who only put on one or two shows that ended up being memorable.

Different scenes existed at the same time, sometimes overlapping, sometimes separate.

How did you get involved with Caper Radio?

I applied to be Music Director around 2014 and worked there for a few years. Before that, I volunteered and did a radio show. It was a strong period because the same staff stayed for several years, which helped build momentum.

Did that role influence your music taste?

It exposed me to a lot of music. I had to filter what went into rotation, which broadened my listening. But I was already used to that from working in record stores and growing up around music.

What led to forming Trash Brain?

It happened naturally. We were friends who wanted to play together, and there were already some songs. The momentum came quickly once we started jamming.

Can you discuss the Trash Brain LP, *Hot As Luv*?

It was recorded before COVID but released later. The delay came from inactivity during that time and some hesitation about final touches. We now have enough material for a second album and are planning demos and recording.

What are you excited about next with Trash Brain?

Recording new material, finishing songs, and possibly releasing the 1st album physically.

We work at our own pace, which is great. I'm also excited about refining ideas; Letting go of weaker ones and focusing on stronger material. Playing with friends keeps it fun, and that's a big part of it

***Not Dead Yet:* From **BRUNCH CLUB** to her **DEAD FRIENDS**, **ELLEN READE**'s Musical Journey...**



Reade performing live, c. 2014 – 2022, in various bands. Photo submitted via Artist

How did Brunch Club shape your musical style?

For Brunch Club, I was really inspired by Twee artists, such as The Vaselines, The Pastels, Heavenly, and the whole C86 scene. I felt, in a lot of ways Brunch Club's kept me stuck, musically, because i was so attached to that writing style and then i fell out of writing because of it. I felt I couldn't grow as a songwriter beyond those cute indie-pop songs that i used to write, but it's been a long-term goal of mine to try to shift out of that.

What was the most defining moment for you during Brunch Club?

The most defining moment for me during Brunch Club was putting out the original **Brunch Club EP** in 2017. I'd never released my own music before, so it was really exciting to share songs I'd written and have that become part of my life.

I was really proud of it, and even almost ten years later, I still

am. I don't really show it to people much or get the chance to talk about it anymore, but that release gave me a lot of confidence. It was a really defining moment for me.



How did The Worst Guy, your solo project, differ from Brunch Club in terms of your creative process?

The music for The Worst Guy is different from Brunch Club in that it

was a lot of songs that didn't really fit with the Brunch Club sound that I'd written from the ages of 18, up to 22, when I recorded it.



They were all songs that were lying around that I wanted to do something with, and I sensed during the pandemic that I'd be going into a new era of my life and that music wasn't going to be a part of it as much previously.

I really wanted to release those songs so my friend Callum, from Dead Friends, and I, sat down and recorded a bunch of them during the pandemic in 2019-2020.

And I really wanted The Worst Guy LP (*Good Morning & Good Night (i won't keep you for an hour longer)*) to sound like a sad lullaby, while also being a bit psychedelic and vaguely country-inspired. But I don't think I managed to capture the country part.

Who were your earliest musical influences, and how did they shape your work?

My earliest musical influences were all these Twee and C86 bands I really liked who had that cute and indie-pop sound, like The Vaselines whom I started listening to in 10th grade, really defined my music taste and listening to similar bands such as Black Tambourine, The Pastels, and Heavenly.

Also shoegaze music, specifically the EP *You Made Me Realize* by My Bloody Valentine was really a defining album for the sound I wanted

DEAD FRIENDS



DEAD FRIENDS (2018)



SHIRLEY (2020)



AIN'T NOW, NEVER
WAS (2022)

to go for, as well as the music of The Shop Assistants. All those bands really defined the type of music i wanted to write early on.

One of my favourite drummers is Nick Mason from Pink Floyd because Pink Floyd was one of the first bands I got really really obsessed with as a teenager.

What was the biggest challenge transitioning from bass guitar to drums in Dead Friends?

The biggest challenge was learning drums, as I was primarily a bass player up until Dead Friends. Jesse and Carter wanted to start a band that could play bars after high school, and since I already knew the Edmonton scene, they wanted me to be in the band because I was their friend. But Carter played bass and I played bass, so it was split between me and Carter on deciding to figure out how to be a drummer, and I just said I'd learn. I really did teach myself almost everything.

I'm entirely self-taught on drums other than some guy in 10th grade named James taught me a few basic 4/4 beats. Later at MacEwan, I would get some of the drumming students to teach me how to do a single fill in exchange for a Twix bar. But, other than that, I've been entirely self-taught.

Did drumming in Dead Friends change the way you approach music overall?

When I was in Brunch Club, I started to get insecure about fronting a band and my art being on display and being the center of attention. So switching to Dead Friends made it able to be all fun. I didn't feel like my art was on display anymore. I could just be in a band and have all the fun of that, without the pressure of needing to be the face of the band and I much preferred that experience overall.

Brunch Club was really fun for a time, but even though we were an indie band from Edmonton, I still felt insecure in it, and Dead

Friends was a lot lower pressure for me.

What was your most memorable experience with Dead Friends?

The most memorable experience was opening up for Calpurnia, Finn Wolfhard's band, in 2018, a room of 1000 people in Union Hall. It was really funny, as half the audience were teenagers that were there to see Finn Wolfhard. They didn't know anything about Dead Friends, in that we were just a bunch of losers in our early 20s who played dive bars in Edmonton.

They treated us like celebrities, asking for our autographs and we thought it was hilarious! I got to be famous for a single night. In that moment, I felt I'd achieved everything I'd wanted to in music! It was such a cool experience playing in a big room and was a great show. It was awesome!

How did your experience as a musician influence your work in festival promotions?

I was a DIY promoter in Edmonton for four years. I started when i was in high school and my band, The Singularities (2014-2015), we sucked and nobody would book us because of our age, and weren't good. I just started booking shows at cafes and in all-ages spaces. I realized I liked that aspect, more than playing in bands, which is why I went to study Arts and Cultural Management.



Reade performing live with The Singularities, her 1st band, on bass. Right: Their sole LP, *Death To The Singularites* (2015)

It's what made me continue to promote shows for four years and then land in the festival world. Those two experiences are very heavily entwined, as I wouldn't have gone into festival management if I hadn't been a musician. And I probably wouldn't still be working in music festivals if I didn't have that interest in music in the first place.

What's the most overlooked aspect of live music that you focus on as a promoter?

I'm not a promoter any longer. I do production management/volunteer management and logistics, but I am burned out on live shows. If I work a music festival, I don't go see a single show because I'm tired and I just want to get through the festival.

Have you ever faced burnout and how do you deal with it creatively?

I've been hibernating for the past six months. I had a really intense year on the festival circuit, having done 14 festivals. I got promotions at four of those this year and I really overworked myself. I've still been working the whole time, but in lower-stakes jobs. I'm not super great dealing with burnout.

I need to let it run its course, be tired, and take care of myself and do things unrelated to work or creativity for a little bit to bounce back. I'm still bouncing back from the insane year I just had, the next festival season is coming up soon, so I need to lock in.

Was working on your solo outlet, The Worst Guy, more freeing or vulnerable?

It was both, in that it was a more vulnerable album because it was a lot of my more personal songs that, weren't as upbeat and twee, but it was freeing releasing all those songs as I wanted to for so many years and it was good to put out an album that was more a reflection of me. I also knew it wasn't an album that was going to go anywhere. I mainly released it for myself, more than I released it for anyone to ever hear or listen to.

What are your thoughts on balancing personal expression with the expectations of band mates in collaborative projects like Brunch Club and Dead Friends?

I definitely am bossy when I'm in bands, and I always had a really specific vision. Sometimes that didn't always go with what everybody else in the band wanted. With Brunch Club, I had these ideas and would fight for what I wanted to do. But ultimately, the point of being in a band is to have contributions from everybody. And if I

wanted to control every single thing about it and have it be purely my creation, then i would just put out a solo album which is what i did with The Worst Guy, but i think being in a band is about fighting really hard for what you want but then ultimately conceding because it's a band and everybody's contribution and vision is equally important.

Looking back on Brunch Club's music, how would you say your sound evolved over time?

It didn't, and while there's a bunch of reasons why the band broke up, but part of the reason that I didn't feel like I wanted to try to continue the band with new members was because I felt stagnant a little bit, and, it wasn't evolving, and I didn't know how to keep writing the same songs over and over again, and I didn't want to, so I don't think Brunch Club really evolved. I think Brunch Club was exactly what it was. It was short-lived. Brunch Club was only a band for a year and a half to two years, so there wasn't time for evolution.

How does Edmonton's music scene differ from London's music scene?

I don't know because I've only went to one show, but it was for a band from Montreal, so I don't know what London's music scene is like.

I worked for London Jazz Festival and it was really cool. There's a lot wider of a spread, like with how many venues there are in London. I'm not really involved in it because the only music festival I work for right now is in Toronto at North By North East, and then for the London Jazz Festival, I was the volunteer coordinator so it wasn't anything on programming or production. I didn't go to any of the shows because I was I was so burnt out.

What does Edmonton do better than the London, UK scene?

I like that Edmonton, and all of Canada, except for Toronto which has its own ecosystem, has a really good cross-country music scene. We all know each other. I remember I used to know people from coast to coast, all in their DIY scenes and I'm unsure if England's like this, it probably is, but I've yet to experience it, but I think there's something extremely unique about the Canadian music scene and how small the cities are. We're all really connected across an insane geographical spread. It's really cool that we can create a national music community, even between all the distance and between all of the cities.

What did London teach you about the industry?

I've worked on music festivals so far, and in Toronto was mostly working for film festivals. I've learned that art scenes and music scenes are similar everywhere you go. There's differences, but London and in my experiences working in festivals, they don't feel that different from Edmonton. There's probably more funding in London, but the bones are the same.

Do you approach festivals differently because of any scenes differences, such as Edmonton/Toronto vs. UK?

I wouldn't say I approach it any differently. I think there's cultural differences. There's small things that I do differently, such as writing emails differently depending on the place I am writing to, such as the formatting and a different choice of wording. I want to just be myself and how I am, no matter the city I'm working in, so there isn't much of a difference in the approach.

What's a hobby you're passionate about outside of music?

I'm violently addicted to Marvel Rivals right now. I've put in over 400 hours, in a year. I also love going to cinemas, micro-cinemas to be exact and seeing independent films. London has a ton of them. One of which I've started going to, is this grindhouse cinema called The Nickel.

If you see any concert, past or present, which would it be?

I'd go back and relive the first show i ever played as a teenager at Chaw Island in Edmonton with my first band, The Singularities, because that would be a fun night to relive and see all my friends again when we're young. That would be the one.

What non-musical activities help you unwind?

Unwind? Marvel Rivals. It used to be Fortnite. I used to be so into Fortnite.

How does your personal music taste differ from what you create for others?

It's no different. The two main genres I listen to are cute indie pop and Garage Rock/Country-Psychedelic music. I do listen to a lot of Hardcore as well, so that's the only music I listen to that I don't make. I've always wanted to be in a hardcore band, I just can't drum fast enough so it's not possible for me.

What new music have you been listening to, that uplifts your mood?

Oh man, I listen to music when I'm in a *bad* mood. The new Toronto-based band, from Cootie Catcher, their album *Something We All Got*, I'm listening to a lot of.

Another band, called Bleary Eyed, and my favourite band of all time is The Magnetic Fields. I'm so obsessed with Magnetic Fields! They're such a good band! I love them! Their whole discography is just phenomenal.

Those would be my top three artists right now!



Photo submitted via Artist.

Between the Lines: 10 Questions with Cape Breton author, Lex Lynn



Who were you as a writer when you published your first book, and how do you see that version of yourself now, fifteen books later?

I promised myself I'd publish a book by 30, and I did. But that version of me feels far away. I was scared, a people pleaser, trying to meet expectations instead of trusting my own voice. A young mom, juggling everything while quietly figuring myself out from Sydney Mines.

Now, at 38, so much has changed. The sugarcoating is gone, in life and in my work. I am who I am. If that's too much for some people, that's okay.

I'm still balancing motherhood, work, and sleepless nights. But one thing never changed: my fire for storytelling. It's always been there, because it matters, to the 80-year-old version of me who still believes in this dream, and to the younger me who started it.

I'm done writing for others. I write to make them proud, past me and future me. My work won't be for everyone, but it will be real. And it will be for someone.

Why did erotic romance become the genre through which you express emotional truth most clearly?

I used to deny I was a romantic. I told myself those deeper, more intimate stories didn't matter, until I experienced them for myself. Then I understood how powerful they can be.

Romance and erotica aren't just "spicy", they can carry real meaning. Even something like showing healthy, respectful BDSM, which is so often misrepresented. I don't write women as bodies; I write how they're seen, desired, respected, because at the core, we all want to be seen. And readers feel that. Some even raise their standards because of it. I know I did.

We still live with outdated ideas about love and sex. I like pushing back against that. I write sweet and spicy because it's personal, it's what I love, and what I believe in.

I want my work to open minds, spark curiosity, and help women feel confident and empowered, in their relationships and in themselves. I want people to feel seen, safe, and unapologetic.

Maybe that's because I felt caged for so long. I don't anymore. And through my writing, I want to give others that same freedom.

What parts of your early work feel most honest now, and what parts feel shaped by fear or market pressure?

Before You Go, my fourth book, was the first time I let myself be fully raw on the page. It tells my dad's story, my Pop. We had planned to write a book together before he passed suddenly in 2018. After he died, I couldn't touch it.

Instead, I filled journals with grief. In 2021, I brought it all together, his life, my loss, and everything that came after. Losing him changed me forever. It still has.

It was the hardest thing I've ever written. No polishing, no hiding, just truth. But I'm proud I did it. My kids now have a piece of him, and others have found comfort in those pages. That made it worth it.

At the time, I felt pressure to stay in one lane. But I knew I wouldn't. I write romance, horror, fantasy, non-fiction, whatever meets me where I am. And where I am can change.

It took me years to realize I don't need permission to do that.

Where do your stories come from emotionally: fantasy, lived experience, observation, or a desire to rewrite reality?

My work comes from a mix of things, fantasy, yes, and sometimes real experience. Lived moments bring a truth you can't fake. I've never made a big deal of that. I just value honesty, and creating a space where people can feel it.

Some stories start with observation, watching strangers, building lives for them in my head. A coat, a voice, a small detail can turn into a whole world. I like taking what's familiar and reshaping it into something new.

But most of all, it starts with music. That's the doorway. A single song can spark everything. I once wrote an entire story inspired by *Uninvited*, playing it on repeat for a week. That story was published.

That's why every book I write has a playlist. It's an invitation, step into the same atmosphere, feel what I felt. Maybe you'll see what I see, or something entirely your own.

There's something a little magical about that shared experience, music and story meeting in the same moment.

Who did you think you were writing for when you began, and who do you believe you are writing for in 2026?

In the beginning, I wrote for fellow parents, motherhood, autism, family life. Those things still matter, but I chose to keep most of it private. My kids come first. I don't share their lives online, and I'm at peace with that.

My view of motherhood has changed too. In my thirties, I learned boundaries. I learned I could do things my own way, and that it's okay to evolve.

We're all learning as we go. We're allowed to change our minds, in life and in our work. I did.

Now, I write for the parts of me that once felt unheard. Sometimes for joy, sometimes for healing. Writing is therapy for me, even when it looks like a wild, fictional chase through the woods.

Some stories come from grief, some from nostalgia, some from the world around me. When things feel heavy, I do what artists have always done, I create.

These days, the noise is gone. It's just me, a pen, and the page.

Why is explicit romance still dismissed as “lesser literature”, & how has the stigma affected you over time?

Explicit romance has often been labelled “lesser”, not because of the writing, but because of what it centers around. Female desire, pleasure, intimacy. That still makes people uncomfortable.

When women write sex that's consensual, fulfilling, and fully owned, it challenges old ideas. And somehow, that gets dismissed as “not serious.” There's a belief that explicit means shallow, but it doesn't. These stories explore consent, power, healing, identity, relationships, the things that shape our lives.

Because it's not seen as traditionally masculine or academic, it's often undervalued. I've felt that in how people question my intelligence. As if writing romance and erotica means I can't also be thoughtful or complex.

I've been told to write something more “appropriate.” But this work is just as valid as any other.

It used to get to me. It doesn't anymore. I love what I do, and that's more than enough to keep going.

What has publishing taught you about creative, financial, & personal power as your career has evolved?

I'm self-published, and it's worked well for me. I don't come from money, but I'm debt-free, and I'm intentional about how I build my work.

I've learned the skills I need, especially design, so I can create without overspending. Everything has to earn its place. There's no one "right" way to do this, some hire help, I chose to learn and do it myself.

It's more work, but I like it that way. I like being in control. I have support, editors, readers, but at the end of the day, the book is mine, cover to cover.

That ownership matters to me. And I'll keep learning, growing, and building, because that's part of the work too.

Where have you drawn boundaries between your private self and your public author persona?

I'm the same person everywhere I show up, no separate version for work and life. The only boundary is my kids. I don't share their lives online. That's non-negotiable.

People know I'm a mother, but I keep their world private. I protect that fully.

Beyond that, what you see is what you get, online, at events, anywhere. It's just me. Sometimes that means fishnets and a corset on a random day, because why not?

Life's too short to wait for an occasion. You are the occasion. Be who you are, now.

Who or what has most challenged your growth as a writer: the industry, readers, or your own expectations?

My growth was hardest in the beginning, when I was creating for expectations instead of myself. I was following someone else's blueprint, and I couldn't grow that way.

Everything changed when I turned inward and trusted my own vision. That's when things started to click. I still have to remind myself sometimes. And then I do, and I remember exactly who I am.

Why do you continue writing smutty romance after fifteen books, and what still feels necessary about it?

Part of it is simple, I love a good love story. The sweet, the spicy, all of it. I love stepping into those worlds and creating them. It's a privilege, and I enjoy every second.

But beyond that, romance gives people language, for emotion, for intimacy, for connection. It teaches empathy, communication, respect. It offers escape, but also hope. A reminder that love, in all its forms, is possible.

These stories reflect real, diverse lives and relationships. They help readers see themselves, and sometimes understand themselves better, their needs, boundaries, desires.

That's why I keep writing romance. There's always more to explore. And I'm **not** done.